



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Superintendents

FROM: David B. Stout, Ed.D.
State Director of Adult Education

DATE: February 2, 2016

RE: GED® Test Passing Score Revision and New Performance Levels Announced

On January 26, the GED® Testing Service announced a recalibration to the GED® test passing score and the addition of two new performance levels. In most states* the passing score for high school equivalency is moving from 150 to 145. The GED® program will also include two optional levels above high school equivalency to signify college readiness, and for some test-takers the opportunity to earn college credits. The scoring enhancement is driven by a detailed analysis of educational outcomes of GED® program graduates compared to high school graduates over the past 18 months.

The passing score of the GED® test will continue to be used to measure high school equivalency and to award a state's GED® credential. The two additional performance levels will be called GED® College Ready, used to signify readiness to enter credit-bearing college courses; and GED® College Ready + Credit, which may qualify students for up to 10 hours of college credit.

The GED® College Ready and GED® College Ready + Credit levels will apply to any student who has taken a GED® test since January 1, 2014. GED® Testing Service also recommends that states apply retroactively the 145 passing score to test-takers who have tested since January 1, 2014. When a state approves applying the passing score retroactively, students who earned scores between 145-149 on the new GED® test launched in January of 2014 would be eligible for their state's high school equivalency credential.

In South Carolina, 571 GED® testers will be impacted. Each of the 571 will be awarded their South Carolina High School Equivalency Diploma. The GED® Diplomas based on the new cut score will be dated December 31, 2015. It may take several weeks to perform the required technology updates in order for the new cut scores to be incorporated in the South Carolina State Department of Education's GED® database. Many other GED® testers may now be very close to passing the test.

South Carolina State Superintendent of Education, Molly Spearman, is pleased to hear that almost 600 more of our residents will soon attain their high school equivalency credential. These residents will have the opportunity to continue their education in postsecondary institutions and to increase the opportunity for employment. Since the GED® testing program started in the early 1940s, over 220,000 South Carolina residents have earned a high school diploma via the GED® testing program.

The South Carolina Department of Education's GED® Testing Office reports that the number of GED® graduates during 2014 and 2015 will increase from 3,512 to 4,083 with the implementation of the new GED® cut scores. During 2015, South Carolina's pass rate on the GED® test was 77 percent. With the inclusion of the additional GED® passers, the revised pass rate should be higher.

"The scoring enhancements are based on an extensive analysis of test-takers' performance data from the past 18 months, conversations with state policymakers and elected officials, and external validation with experts," said GED® Testing Service President Randy Trask. "This is part of our ongoing commitment to make data-based decisions, and continually improve the efficacy of the GED® program."

After collecting and analyzing extensive data on test-taker performance and early outcomes, the GED® program can now measure the full spectrum of a typical graduating high school class. A graduating class represents a range of ability and performance, from those meeting the minimum requirements to those demonstrating college readiness, and those who may even earn college credits during high school.

"The GED® program continues to be much more than a high school equivalency test. These scoring changes, coupled with the new support systems such as the recently released career pathways tools, or the other extensive resources available through MyGED, mean more adult learners will be prepared for the next step in their career pathway," said GED® Testing Service President Randy Trask.

GED® Testing Service will continue to work tirelessly with state partners to help increase the nation's educational attainment goals and economic competitiveness. The organization will continue to build partnerships with employers (like the recently announced GEDWorks) and apprenticeship programs, and work with colleges and state agencies to strengthen the connections between the GED® credential and jobs that pay a living wage.

For more information, please visit this [link](#). There you will find answers to frequently asked questions, graphics explaining the new scoring system, audio clips discussing the changes, and more.

*Many states are able to implement these enhancements immediately. We are also working closely with those that require additional state approval or rule changes to implement GED® Testing Service's recommendations.

Superintendents
Page 3
February 2, 2016

About GED® Testing Service

The GED® test has opened doors to better jobs and college programs for more than 20 million graduates since 1942. The GED® test is accepted by virtually all U.S. colleges and employers. As the creator of the one official GED® test, GED® Testing Service has a responsibility to ensure that the program continues to be a reliable and valuable pathway to a better life for the millions of adults without a high school diploma. GED® Testing Service is a joint venture between the American Council on Education and Pearson.

cc: Adult Education Program Directors